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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Rabid Skunk Bites Idaho Teen

A wild skunk infected with rabies bit a teenager in Gooding County in south-central Idaho. The teen is under medical care and receiving proper treatments.

Each year several bats test positive for rabies in Idaho; however, this is the first reported case of a rabid skunk in the state. There is no indication that rabid skunks are currently found anywhere else in Idaho. Specimens from the skunk have been sent to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for further testing.

Rabies is a disease caused by a virus that attacks the central nervous system and can be fatal if not treated promptly. “Medical treatment administered to people after an animal bite is extremely effective in preventing rabies and other infections,” says Dr. Leslie Tengelsen, Deputy State Epidemiologist. “It is important for people to wash the bitten area well and then call their health care provider if they have been bitten by a wild animal, unvaccinated pet or pet whose vaccine has expired.”

Skunks tend to live communally with other skunks, which could mean there may be additional rabid skunks in the Gooding County area. “Skunks are attracted to cat and dog food, which increases the chance that a domestic pet will come in contact with a skunk,” Tengelsen says. “Pet owners can move all pet food indoors or cover it between feeding times and make sure their pets are up-to-date on their vaccinations.”

People should avoid contact with wild animals, especially if they appear sick, act abnormally or are aggressive. People can contact their local animal control or Fish and Game office to report wild animals that may be a concern. If your pet has had recent contact with a wild animal, contact your veterinarian immediately.

Learn more about rabies at the Centers for Disease Control and Preventions website at
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/>

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